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ABSTRACT

A study examined the use of online computer resources by students and educators in journalism and mass communication programs. Heads of 200 journalism and mass communication programs at member schools of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication were surveyed in February 1996. Of the 133 (67%) responding, the average enrollment was 409 students, 368 undergraduates and 41 graduate students, with an average of 16 full-time faculty. Results indicated that access to online resources, including email and the Internet, was provided to professors in 96% of the journalism and mass communication programs, with 87% providing access to the World Wide Web (WWW). Students had access to these resources in 93% of these programs, with 90% giving access to email and the Internet, and 80% to the WWW. Other online services include university library catalogs, registration and class information, and networked software. A home page on the WWW was reported in 71% of the programs and 50% of the professors have WWW pages. Professors used computer online resources in teaching classes in 88% of the schools and 72% communicate with students via email. Online distance education was only offered in 23 of 133 programs (17%) and only 3 met in real-time. Findings revealed, however, that only about 60% of program administrators reported that online resources had substantially changed how these programs were taught. Although online teaching may not be as effective as traditional classroom teaching, respondents suggest that it is a viable distance learning method, reaching students who could not otherwise be reached. (Author/CR)

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Going Online To Teach Journalism and Mass Communication

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Going Online To Teach Journalism and Mass Communication

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A survey of U.S. journalism and mass communication programs reveals that students and educators at the overwhelming majority of schools have access to a variety of online computer resources. Most programs have created World Wide Web pages and offer instruction in computer-assisted reporting and online information retrieval. Although almost all schools have online resources, only about 60 percent of the administrators of the programs reported that online resources had substantially changed how journalism and mass communication was taught. Only a few schools are using online connections in distance education.

The information superhighway is dangled before educators as a fount of unending educational benefit. There is presently a rush of educators and government officials to online, distance education as a cost-effective and practical delivery system, especially for higher education.[1] Others, on the other hand, are skeptical of online resources as the answer for all informational and educational needs.[2] One commentator maintains that instead of improving education, computer networks will "undercut our schools and libraries."[3] A critic of the "incessant hype" over the World Wide Web suggests "there's a lot less there than meets the eye."[4]

To get beyond the hype about the potential for computer linkages, online information sources and, yes, the World Wide Web, this article reports the findings of a survey of journalism and mass communication educators to see how programs across the country are actually using online services and computer linkages in teaching. Several aspects of diffusion of online innovations in journalism and mass communication education are explored. In particular, how universities are using computer linkages to create virtual classrooms is addressed.

Online Resources in University Teaching

One reason that journalism programs are interested in using online resources in teaching is the need to stay current with practice in the media professions. In their 1993 study of the use of information retrieval from online databases, Brooks and Yang found that 100 percent of large newspapers (100,000-plus) and 52 percent of medium-size

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[1] *See* Doug Abrahms, "Western Governors Plan a Campus of Computers: Virtual University for Far-Flung Students," *The Washington Times*, 11 December 1995, 1(A); Michelle Cole, "Governors Push Virtual University," *The Idaho Statesman*, 3 December 1995, 1(B).

[2] Ingrid Martin, "UA's Komisar Labels Virtual University 'Weak Education,'" *Alaska Journal of Commerce* 20, no. 1 (29 January 1996):1. University of Alaska President Jerome B. Komisar said that although education funding is drying up at all levels of government, the virtual university is not the answer to higher education money woes. Komisar said, "If investment in the virtual university is viewed as an alternative to investment in colleges and universities, we will all be the losers."

[3] Clifford Stoll, *Silicon Snake Oil* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 3. His reservations about online connections are that they isolate people, cheapen the meaning of actual experience and work against literacy and creativity.

[4] Alfred Glossbrenner, "The Terrible Truth About the World-Wide Web," *Online User* 1, no. 1 (Oct./Nov. 1995): 64.

newspapers (50,000 to 100,000) had used newsroom computers to access external databases.[5] On the other hand, in a 1993 study of journalism programs, DeFleur and Davenport found that only 13 percent of the 258 schools responding to their survey offered formal instruction in online database searching.[6] In a 1995 study, Lee and Fleming suggested that despite the widespread use of computer-assisted reporting skills in newsrooms, "most university journalism programs have yet to introduce their first CAR [computer-assisted reporting] course."[7]

While many journalism programs appear to have access to online resources, the use of these resources is not as pervasive. A 1993 case study of two communication programs revealed that nearly 97 percent of the faculty had computers in their offices, two-thirds of the faculty were regularly using Nexis/Lexis but only one third were regularly using electronic mail.[8] In a study of acceptance of new media technologies by journalism educators and students, Craig et al. found that while the largest group of subjects were eager to adopt new media technologies, many others were skeptical about the impact of new technologies and worried about their impact on individual privacy and their potential for control or manipulation of information.[9]

Teaching students to use online computer services to access information is just one side of the contribution online computer services can make to journalism and mass communication education. Educators are using online connections as the medium for teaching. Many universities and colleges delivering courses to distant learning sites use

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[5] Brian S. Brooks and Tai-en Yang, "Patterns of Computer Use in Newspaper Newsrooms: A National Study of U.S. Dailies," Kansas City, Missouri: AEJMC Annual Convention, 1993, 16-19.

[6] Margaret H. DeFleur and Lucinda D. Davenport, "Innovation Lag: Computer-Assisted Journalism in Newsrooms v. Classrooms," *Journalism Educator* 48 (Summer 1993): 26-36.

[7] Kevin C. Lee and Charles A. Fleming, "Problems of Introducing Courses in Computer-Assisted Reporting," *Journalism Educator* 50 (Autumn 1995): 24. The study found that journalism education programs trying to implement CAR courses faced problems with the cost and maintenance of equipment and the lack of persons qualified to teach online searching and database analysis.

[8] Thomas J. Herling, "Adoption of Computer Communication Technology by Communication Faculty: A Case Study," Washington, D.C.: AEJMC Annual Convention, 1995.

[9] David Craig, et al., "Facing the Future: Attitudes of Journalism Educators and Students About New Media Technologies," Washington, D.C.: AEJMC Annual Convention, 1995.

audio-, video- and computer-conferencing technologies to reach students in distant settings. For example, professors at two journalism and mass communication programs, Indiana University and Michigan State University, used two-way video and audio links over common carrier phone lines to team teach an inter-university graduate seminar.[10]

Outside the journalism and mass communication arena, the delivery of college and university courses by computer linkages to distant learning sites is booming. The online program of the University of Phoenix, based in San Francisco, uses computer conferencing to deliver degree programs in business and management and currently serves 1,600 students.[11] The New School for Social Research in New York has 350 students in its Internet bachelor's degree program in liberal arts.[12] At the University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth, the division of continuing education offers online course work through its CyberEd program under the slogan, "Delivering quality education from our desktops to yours."[13] The University of Wisconsin at Madison began offering online classes in January 1996. Professors place on the Web course notes, reading materials, exams, pictures and videos. Brian Rust, marketing communications manager for UW's Division of Information Technology, said, "There is a fair amount of demand for [online courses] because the university is looking for ways to save money and still teach more and more students."[14] In 1994, several educators created the Virtual Online University,[15] which has no real-world campus. VOU's subsidiary institution, Athena University, offers

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[10] Teresa McMahon, Walter Gantz and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Interactive Technology and Inter-University Team Teaching: Losing Inhibitions in Distance Education," *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* 50 (Summer 1995): 62-70.

[11] Denise Hamilton, "Online Colleges Have You Earning a Degree from Home," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 1996, 11(D2).

[12] Ibid.

[13] University of Massachusetts World Wide Web Home Page, http://www.umassd.edu/cybered/olddistlearninghome.html, 16 February 1996.

[14] Dave Newbart, " UW to Offer On-Line Class in Geology," *Capital Times*, 26 October 1995, 1(A).

[15] Mary Beth Marklein, "Long-distance Learning On Line at Virtual U," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 10 January 1995, p. C1; Robert Moskowitz, "Go to Virtual College, Get a Real Education," *Investor's Business Daily*, 18 May 1995, 1(A).

350 liberal arts courses at $300 per course and in December 1995 was completing its second quarter with 50 students enrolled.[16]

Several electronic clearing houses for online college degree programs have emerged.[17] The Electronic University Network, available on America Online, offers a virtual academic center, in which students can meet for scheduled lectures and class discussion. The Globewide Network Academy is a World Wide Web site that lists online course offerings from colleges and universities worldwide. Among schools listed at the site are Indiana University, the University of Arizona, the University of Colorado at Boulder, the University of Maryland, the University of Minnesota, the University of Missouri and the University of Washington.[18]

Some of the online course offerings discussed above look much like the traditional correspondence course, except that the correspondence is accomplished by rapid, electronic delivery of course materials. These courses involve posting course materials, syllabi, lectures and assignments on Web sites or on computer bulletin boards, and using e-mail to send assignments to students and to receive completed work. In some programs, online textual materials are supplemented by video or audio tapes mailed to the students. With the advent of the World Wide Web, some schools are providing Web visuals as well. Others are using conferencing systems that permit students to read a series of electronic messages left by their professors and fellow students and to add their own comments to the file. A few universities are conducting real-time seminars online by using chat rooms, that consists of typing messages back and forth online.[19]

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16 Joan O'Brien, "One Virtual University is a Virtual Reality," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 December 1996, 1(B).
17 Moskowitz, 1(A).
18 Globewide Network Academy World Wide Web Home Page, http://uu-gna.mit.edu/uu-gna/index.html, 27 February 1996.
19 Mark Silk, "On-Line Class Teaches Law of the Net," *The Austin American-Statesman*, 30 September 1995, 6(D).

Surveying Online Use at Journalism and Mass Communication Programs

Educators need to be aware of the diffusion of online resources in teaching in their subject areas. Although there is some documentation of the use of online resources in journalism education at a few schools and in the specific context of computer-assisted reporting, there is scant evidence of how journalism and mass communication programs throughout the United States are using online linkages and information sources in their teaching. This study answers several key questions about the use of online resources in teaching journalism and mass communication:

1. What online resources are available to journalism and mass communication professors and students?

2. How are professors at journalism and mass communication programs using online information resources in teaching students in traditional classes; and how extensive is the impact of online resources on teaching journalism and mass communication?

3. Are journalism and mass communication programs using online connections in distance education; what online teaching procedures are being used by those who are teaching online; and what have been the experiences of those teaching online?

To answer these areas of inquiry, the heads of the 200 journalism and mass communication programs at the U.S. member schools of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication were surveyed.[20] The current mailing list of educators heading the programs was obtained from the headquarters of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Columbia, S.C. A four-page questionnaire and a cover letter were mailed on February 7, 1996, and the respondents were asked to return it in a postage-paid envelope. A second mailing was sent to non-respondents four weeks after the first. Those who reported that they were teaching classes online were contacted by telephone for an in-depth interview about teaching classes

[20] The reason for surveying the 200 ASJMC-member schools in the United States is that these schools share similar standards of and commitments to journalism and mass communication education.

online. One hundred thirty-three, 67 percent of those surveyed, responded. The average enrollment of the responding programs was 409 students, of which 368 were undergraduates and 41 were graduate students. The average number of full-time faculty was 16.

Online Resources at JMC Programs

Almost all of the journalism and mass communication programs (96 percent) reported that their schools provide professors access to online resources. See Table 1.

Table 1
Online Resources Available to Students and Professors in Journalism and Mass Communication Programs
(N=133)

	Percentage of respondents
JMC Programs provide professors online access to . . .	
campus computer network	96%
electronic mail	96%
Internet	96%
World Wide Web	87%
library online catalog	91%
university registration	67%
student records	51%
networked software	51%
at least one commercial database	65%
JMC programs provide students online access to . . .	
campus computer network	93%
electronic mail	90%
Internet	90%
World Wide Web	80%
library online catalog	82%
university registration	49%
networked software	44%
commercial database	57%

Ninety-six percent of the schools provide their professors access to electronic mail, 96 percent access to the Internet and 87 percent to the World Wide Web. Other online resources provided by linkage to the campus computer include online access to the

university library catalog (91 percent), access to university registration and class information (66 percent), access to student records (50 percent) and access to networked software (51 percent). Sixty-five percent of the journalism and mass communication programs reported that their university provides their faculty access to at least one commercial online service.[21] Ninety-seven percent of journalism and mass communication faculty have computers in their offices. Of those with computers in their office, 88 percent are linked either by modem or direct wire to the campus network from their office.

Ninety-three percent of the journalism and mass communication programs reported that their students have access to online resources, almost as great a percentage as reported their professors have access. Ninety percent of the schools provide their students access to electronic mail, 90 percent access to the Internet and 80 percent to the World Wide Web. Other online resources provided through the linkage to the campus computer include online access to the university library catalog (82 percent), access to university registration and class information (49 percent), and access to networked software (44 percent). Eighteen percent of the programs reported that students must pay a fee for remote access to the main campus computer. Fifty-seven percent of the journalism and mass communication programs reported that their institutions provide students access to at least one commercial online service.[22]

Seventy-one percent of the journalism and mass communication programs reported that they have a home page on the World Wide Web and an additional 11 percent have pages under construction. Concerning the information placed on the Web

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[21] Forty-seven percent of the programs that responded to the survey said their professors have access to Nexis/Lexis, 25 percent to OCLC First Search, 20 percent to Dialog and 11 percent had access to Westlaw. Only 5 percent of the programs provide their professors CompuServe, 6 percent America Online, 2 percent Microsoft Network and 2 percent Prodigy.

[22] Forty percent of the programs that responded to the survey said their students have access to Nexis/Lexis, 20 percent to OCLC First Search, 17 percent to Dialog and 9 percent had access to Westlaw. Only two percent of the programs provide their students CompuServe, three percent America Online, and one percent Prodigy.

pages, 56 percent of the responding programs said they list course offerings on the page, 55 percent include degree requirements, 53 percent professor biographical information, and 28 percent contain course syllabi. Department news was on the Web sites at 46 percent of the programs, semester schedules at 29 percent, application materials at 24 percent of the programs, and department newspapers/magazines at 9 percent of the programs.[23]

Fifty percent of the programs reported that their professors have World Wide Web pages. Concerning the resources included on those Web pages, 35 percent of the programs reported that professors have biographical information, 31 percent course syllabi, 20 percent course offerings, 11 percent semester schedules, 8 percent department news and 6 percent degree requirements.[24]

Using Online Resources in Teaching

Eighty-eight percent of the schools said their professors use computer online resources in teaching classes. See Table 2. Professors at 72 percent of the programs

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Table 2
How Journalism and Mass Communication Programs Use Online Resources in Teaching
(N=133)

	Percentage of respondents
Use online resources in teaching	88%
Teach classes in computer lab wired to campus network	77%
Use e-mail to communicate with students	72%
Get class materials from online sources	68%
Post assignments online	53%
Receive class assignments online	55%
Teach students online information retrieval	84%
Offer computer-assisted reporting class	53%
Offer other class dedicated to teaching online resources	35%

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[23] Other materials that respondents indicated were on their department Web sites include publications for alumni, information about professional student organizations, financial aid information and links to faculty home pages and other Web sites for journalism resources.

[24] Among the other materials respondents reported on professors' home pages were class assignments, resources for journalists and professors' publications.

communicate with class members by electronic mail. Professors at 68 percent of the programs get reference materials online for use in class. Professors at 53 percent of the programs post online course assignments for students, and professors at 55 percent of the programs receive course assignments from students online. Eighty-four percent of the responding programs reported that they teach their students online information retrieval. Fifty-three percent of the programs offer a computer-assisted reporting class. Thirty-five percent of the respondents offer a course dedicated to teaching online services and information retrieval. Seventy-seven percent of the programs reported that they teach classes in labs with computers linked to the campus main computer.

The educators were asked about the impact of online resources on the way they teach journalism and mass communication at their programs. Ten percent said that online computer resources had changed overwhelmingly the way they taught journalism and mass communication, 51 percent said online resources had changed it quite a bit, 37 percent said online resources had changed teaching not very much and only two percent said online resources had not changed their teaching at all.

Respondents were asked what percentage of their journalism/mass communication faculty had embraced the use of online resources in teaching. While only 5 percent of the respondents said 100 percent of their faculty had embraced their use, 16 percent said at least 75 percent had embraced their use and 33 percent reported that at least 50 percent had embraced the use of online resources in teaching. On the other hand, 25 percent of the program administrators reported that at least a fourth of the faculty and 21 percent reported that less than a fourth of the faculty had embraced the use of online resources in teaching.

The program administrators were asked a similar question about their students: What percentage of your students have embraced the use of online resources in their journalism/mass communication education? Of those responding, 7 percent reported 100 percent of their students had embraced online resources in their education, 24 percent said

at least 75 percent and 27 percent of the respondents checked that at least 50 percent of their students had embraced the use of online resources. On the other hand, 25 percent of the administrators said only at least one fourth of their students had embraced the use of online resources, and the remaining 17 percent of respondents said that less than a fourth of their students had embraced the use of online resources.

Distance Learning and Online Classes

Given the interest in distance education and in particular the recent increase by other disciplines in offering classes online to distant learning sites, one would assume that journalism and mass communication programs are involved in distance learning. However, only a few programs reported such activities and only a handful are offering classes online. Twenty-three out of 133 programs, 17 percent, reported that they offer classes to distant learning sites, that is to students who take course work without regularly attending class sessions in the physical presence of the professor. See Table 3. Of those

Table 3
Distance Education at Journalism and Mass Communication Programs
(N=133)

	Percentage of respondents
Programs that have offered distance education classes	17%
Programs that have used this as the primary vehicle to transmit course information in distance education:	
online computer linkages	4%
satellite linkages	5%
telephone video/audio transmissions	11%
mailed videotapes	3%
television microwave transmissions	2%
mailed printed materials	4%

schools which have offered distance learning, a number of vehicles have been used to get course presentations and information to students. Five schools (4 percent) used online computer linkages, six (5 percent) transmitted class presentations and information by satellite linkages, 15 schools (11 percent) transmitted class presentations/ information by

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telephone video and/or audio transmissions, four schools (3 percent) transmitted class presentations/ information by videotapes mailed to students, two schools (2 percent) used television microwave signals and five schools (4 percent) mailed printed materials to students as a primary vehicle to get course presentations/information to students.

Of the five schools which have used computer linkages to transmit class presentations and information to students at distance learning sites, only three said they have met online for synchronous, real-time class discussion and instruction in electronic chat rooms or conference rooms. Two have used Internet bulletin boards to post class materials, four have used Internet electronic mail to send class presentations and materials, two have posted class materials on a World Wide Web page, one has used an Internet chat room, and one has used a CompuServe conference room for synchronous class meetings.

These programs have used computer linkages to transmit class presentations and information to distant learning students in a variety of ways. Two schools have used computer linkages to transmit program information, two have transmitted the schedule of online classes, three have transmitted syllabi online, and four have transmitted lectures online. At all five schools using online computer linkages in distant learning, professors receive and respond to questions from students by e-mail. All five transmit assignments and receive completed assignments online. At three of the schools, teachers transmit tests to students online, and the students return their tests through online linkages. Of the five respondents that have taught classes online, two schools taught only undergraduate classes, two taught just graduate classes and one school taught both.[25]

A professor at each of the seven schools that indicated that they were using or planned to use online computer connections in distance education was contacted for an

[25] Online undergraduate classes listed by respondents include community journalism, advanced reporting, introduction to communication research, photojournalism, media effects, public relations cases, and public relations introduction. Online graduate classes listed by respondents include public relations management, journalism administration, journalism research methods, theories of mass communication, and the law of mass communication.

in-depth interview. Of the seven, only two, Rutgers University and the University of Memphis, have offered courses through online connections to students who were not already taking traditional classes. In fall 1995 Rutgers Professor Todd Hunt, director of distance education for his department, taught a graduate class, Public Relations Management, in which students used an e-mail distribution list to send comments and questions on the class material.[26] All computer communications were asynchronous; there were no real time meetings online. Students viewed 10 hours of course presentations on videotapes and submitted answers to the questions. Class members met on campus the fourth week of the semester for an orientation to using the computer to communicate. Students met on campus the eighth week for a mid-term exam and again the 15th week to present their semester research. Rutgers taught two classes in spring 1996 using this model and average enrollment in the online courses was ten students. The online students were working and living in the Rutgers area.

The online master of journalism courses at the University of Memphis were all real-time seminars. Students met with the professor for three hours two nights a week for six weeks to discuss assigned material. The online courses were taught in a conference room in either the Journalism Forum or Public Relations Forum of CompuServe.[27] Students and professors type questions or comments that are immediately seen by fellow class members. In addition, lecture notes and study questions were e-mailed to students prior to class sessions and students would e-mail responses and comments. The University of Memphis began offering its online courses in January 1995. Students taking the online classes have not been within commuting distance of the university and live in states as far away as New York and California. Class sizes have been relatively small, less than ten and as few as five.

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[26] Todd Hunt of New Brunswick, N.J. , telephone interview by author, 20 March 1996.
[27] Bill Brody, interview by author, 28 March 1996.

Several programs indicated they had plans for distance education online later in 1996. In fall 1996 Professor Larry Pearson, the University of Alaska at Anchorage, will teach community journalism to students at remote locations using electronic mail.[28] In fall 1995 he modeled the online techniques in an independent study with a student in central Alaska who needed to take advanced reporting to complete her course work. All communication and assignments were made online and completed work was returned via electronic mail.

A professor in the department of communication studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute has already used listserves to complement traditional teaching in on-campus courses. Later in 1996 the school plans to offer a distance education media law class through online connections to high school teachers in Virginia. Professor Wat Hopkins said he is planning a course page on the World Wide Web and will schedule meetings in an Internet chat room.[29]

A few other programs are teaching online but they are only targeting on-campus, traditional students. In fall 1995 Professor Barbara Shoemake at the University of Southern Mississippi taught a public relations campaigns class online to on-campus students.[30] The class met three times a week in an electronic chat room. She also e-mailed lecture notes to students. Shoemake said that at mid-semester class members requested that they meet once a week in person, which the class did. She said an obstacle to online teaching with her traditional students is that many do not have computers and have to access the chat room in a campus lab.

Two other programs plan to use online connections to teach traditional, on-campus students later this year. In fall 1996 the college of journalism at the University of Maryland will teach a course online.[31] However, the purpose is not to reach distant

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[28] Larry Pearson of Anchorage, Alaska, telephone interview by author, 20 March 1996.
[29] Wat Hopkins of Blacksburg, Va., telephone interview by author, 20 March 1996.
[30] Barbara Shoemake of Hattiesburg, Miss., telephone interview by author, 20 March 1996.
[31] Christopher Callahan of College Park, Md., telephone interview by author, 19 March 1996.

students but instead to access the expertise of a distant professor, a former faculty member who will teach advanced writing from Oregon to traditional graduate students at Maryland. He will use a closed listserve to teach the students. The journalism department at East Texas State University plans an online class in summer 1996 for its on-campus students.[32] Professor Hendrik Overduin will post class materials and exercises online and class members will use electronic mail for questions and answers. He said students will use on-campus labs to go online because most of the students do not have computers at home.

Discussion

Institutions of higher education have been on the forefront of innovation in communication technology. Research universities have enjoyed connectivity for many years through what is now the Internet. This study confirms previous findings that online resources and connections are almost universally available in journalism and mass communication education. Nearly all U.S. universities with ASJMC journalism and mass communication programs provide their professors and students access to online resources, such as electronic mail, access to the library online catalog, and access to institutional information as well as access to online databases, such as Nexis/Lexis. Almost all journalism and mass communication faculty have computers in their offices and the large majority of the office computers are connected to the main campus computer. Clearly journalism and mass communication educators and students are connected.

Previous studies indicated that many journalism programs had been slow to use these resources in teaching as well as to develop computer-assisted reporting classes and other courses dedicated to teaching online information retrieval. However, as the recent explosion of interest in the Internet buoyed by the advent of the World Wide Web would suggest, journalism and mass communication educators have incorporated online resources in teaching their students. This study indicates that the incorporation of online

[32] Hendrik Overduin of Commerce, Texas, telephone interview by author, 20 March 1996.

resources into teaching has reached a mature stage in the S-pattern of adoption of innovations.[33]

Given the widespread practice of computer-assisted reporting and use of online resources in the communications professions, it is not surprising that most journalism and mass communication programs are now teaching the use of online resources and computer-assisted reporting. While just three years ago one study reported that only 13 percent of reporting journalism and mass communication programs were providing formal instruction in online database searching,[34] 84 percent of the programs in 1996 reported that they are teaching their students online information retrieval, lending support to Rogers' finding that after diffusion of innovation reaches the level of 10 percent to 20 percent adoption, the rate of diffusion takes off.[35] While 53 percent of the programs now offer a computer-assisted reporting class, the larger journalism and mass communication programs (73 percent of those with greater than the average enrollment) were more likely (p=.001) to offer CAR classes than were the smaller programs (43 percent).[36]

While nearly all journalism and mass communication programs are using to some extent online resources in their teaching, the adoption of online innovations has not spread throughout teaching at the individual programs. Regarding the extent of the impact of these online resources on teaching journalism and mass communication, the adoption of innovations is not as overwhelming and suggests that traditional education techniques prevail in many journalism classrooms. While more than 60 percent of the journalism administrators reported that online resources had changed how they taught journalism

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[33] Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1995), 262. Rogers found in plotting percentage of adoption by time an S-pattern of adoption of innovations, with a few innovators (2.5 percent), followed by early adopters (13.5 percent), the early majority (34 percent), the late majority (34 percent) and a few laggards (16 percent).

[34] DeFleur and Davenport, 26-36.

[35] Rogers, 259.

[36] The only other variable that was significantly related to the size of the journalism and mass communication program was the existence of Web page. A surprising 71 percent of the programs have World Wide Web sites and an additional 11 percent have them under construction. The larger programs (85 percent of those with greater than the average enrollment) were more likely (p=.016) to have a Web page than were the smaller programs (63 percent).

education either overwhelmingly or quite a bit, nearly 40 percent said either it had changed their teaching not very much or not at all. While 54 percent of the administrators said that at least half their faculty had embraced the use of online resources in their teaching, 46 percent of the respondents indicated that less than half their faculty had embraced the use of online resources in teaching, a surprising finding given the availability of online resources. The results were similar for the embrace of online resources by journalism and mass communication students. While online resources are almost universally available to faculty and students in journalism and mass communication programs and being used in teaching at almost all the programs, the adoption of these innovations by the faculties and students within each program has passed only just beyond the mid-point. This finding supports a 1995 study of a Midwestern journalism program that many professors and students remain skeptical of the benefits of new technologies.[37]

Although an overwhelming majority of schools are using online resources in teaching traditional classes and most faculty and students have embraced them, the use of online connections in distance education remains at the stage of a few innovators and early adopters.[38] Only five schools reported that they have taught classes online. And of the five, only three have taught classes online to distance learning sites. Resistance to this innovative way of teaching may result from the substantial suspicion of distance learning by traditional educators.[39] Although there is an explosion in the number of online courses being offered by both traditional and nontraditional universities, the resistance of traditional educators is one reason why there are so few early adopters among journalism and mass communication programs teaching classes online. Two respondents from

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[37] David Craig, et al., "Facing the Future: Attitudes of Journalism Educators and Students About New Media Technologies," Washington, D.C.: AEJMC Annual Convention, 1995.
[38] Rogers, 262.
[39] Don Olcott, Jr. and Stephen J. Wright, "An Institutional Framework for Increasing Faculty Participation in Postsecondary Distance Education," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 9, n. 3 (1995): 5-17. Despite the advances in technologies associated with distance learning, many faculty remain skeptical of distance learning.

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programs teaching courses online admitted that it was difficult to get colleagues to teach a course online.

What this does not explain is why so few ASJMC-member programs are offering courses online while colleagues in other disciplines at many of the same universities are offering courses online.[40] One explanation is that hands-on, skills-oriented courses in journalism/mass communication programs are not as easily delivered online as content-centered, theory classes in other departments. That rationale is somewhat undermined by the offering of 292 writing courses online in the Globewide Network Academy listing.[41] Another explanation is that because journalism and mass communication programs have had relatively steady enrollments, they are not desperate to enroll additional online students. Many are already restrained by inadequate resources to meet the needs of on-campus students desiring journalism education.[42] However, given that undergraduate journalism and mass communication enrollments have been on a decline since they peaked in 1989 and the number of undergraduate degrees granted in 1993-94 was less than the previous year,[43] some programs might seek to bolster enrollments by recruiting nonconventional students, such as those in the online environment.

Even if there are plenty of on-campus students, journalism and mass communication educators cannot ignore the innovations in distance education. Many leaders in education and government see a prominent role for online education in the future. The editor of *The American Journal of Distance Learning* suggests that once fiber-optic technologies are installed in schools and homes in the United States and throughout the world, the vast capacity in the home to send and receive multimedia

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[40] Globewide Network Academy World Wide Web Home Page, http://uu-gna.mit.edu/uu-gna/index.html, 27 February 1996.
[41] Ibid..
[42] Lee B. Becker and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Graduate Degrees Increase 23%, But Bachelor Numbers Decline," *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 65.
[43] Ibid. The enrollment survey, however, found graduate degrees up dramatically.

information will challenge "classical pedagogical practices in our schools. . . ."[44] Government officials are rushing to support higher education through computer linkages. Ohio University President Robert Glidden proposed that Ohio colleges collaborate in a virtual university to offer courses and degrees via computer.[45] In December 1995 the Western states' governors agreed to create a virtual university that would serve students throughout their region.[46] Among the reasons the governors are pursuing this initiative is to save money by allowing states to serve more students without building new campuses.[47] Since the governors' meeting, Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt has created a Utah Steering Committee for the Virtual University,[48] and the Utah State Senate passed a resolution calling for the creation of a regional virtual university.[49]

Besides delivering courses at a savings to the traditional classroom, other advantages cited for distance learning include reaching large numbers of students who cannot attend traditional classrooms because of time or distance and providing flexible learning materials to students.[50] The experiences of the respondents who are teaching journalism courses online only partly support these contentions about online education. The major reason for offering courses online is that students who would not otherwise be reached could be served. Rutgers said they were reaching corporate workers in a large, congested urban community who could not easily commute to campus for a semester of

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[44] Michael G. Moore, "Editorial: The Death of Distance," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 9 (1995): 1.

[45] "Virtual University: Ohio Should Jump into 'Cyber' Higher Ed," *Columbus Dispatch*, 19 January 1996, 10(A).

[46] Doug Abrahms, "Western Governors Plan a Campus of Computers: Virtual University for Far-Flung Students," *The Washington Times*, 11 December 1995, 1(A).

[47] Michelle Cole, "Governors Push Virtual University," *The Idaho Statesman*, 3 December 1995, 1 (B). Educators at traditional universities have expressed skepticism of the Western governor's virtual university. Meeting in response to the governors' call for a regional virtual university, Western university presidents and administrators expressed reservations about turning degree granting over to a consortia of universities.

[48] Joan O'Brien, "Leavitt Bringing Team Together for Virtual U.," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 31 January 1996, 1(B).

[49] State of Utah Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 7, 1996 UT S.C.R 7 (19 February 1996).

[50] Bonny N. Goodwin, Beverly A. Miklich, and J.U. Overall, "Perceptions and Attitudes of Faculty and Students in Two Distance Learning Modes of Delivery: Online Computer and Telecourse," Orlando, Fla.: Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education, 1993.

classes. The University of Memphis has taught professionals living hundreds of miles from its campus. The University of Memphis found that delivering a graduate seminar online in a real-time environment is a satisfactory alternative to a traditional classroom for these students. The online setting provides the instructor a distinct advantage in his or her ability to evaluate students based solely on their knowledge of the material and contribution to the seminar. There is little possibility for discrimination against students based on race, pattern of speech and disabling condition. If they have the physical capacity to manipulate the keyboard, then students are on a level playing field in the online seminar. The University of Memphis online students have engaged in successful online discussion of course material and have written excellent exams and semester papers. Online education does work.

However, the respondents' experiences of teaching online do not support the contention that online education saves time and money. Teaching online does not save the professor time or use fewer resources than a traditional class. Both Rutgers and the Memphis charge online students higher fees to cover additional costs involved in teaching online. Extensive preparation of course materials was necessary. Online students tend to require a great deal of one-to-one communication through electronic mail or by telephone, communication which would take place in class in a traditional setting. Large numbers of students in classes are not part of the model at the University of Memphis, which has limited the numbers in the online seminars to less than ten. More than that number would overwhelm the capacity of a professor to keep online students engaged because of the absence of visual cues online, another disadvantage of the online teaching environment.[51] Also, the experience at the University of Memphis is that students online have been more likely to drop out of the graduate program than are traditional graduate students. This may be due to the absence of the reinforcement of physical community

[51] The rapid advance of online technology may remedy this problem. Rapid transmission of video and sound by computer-mounted cameras and microphones is becoming available. Moore, " The Death of Distance," 1.

with fellow students and faculty.[52] Given the limitations of online education noted above, online distance education will probably remain a distant second to traditional, on-campus teaching.

Although online teaching may not be as effective as traditional classroom teaching, professors teach and students learn. The University of Memphis experience of teaching graduate seminars in an electronic, real-time class room and the experiences of the other respondents teaching online suggest that online education is an viable teaching method. Journalism educators have been leaders in developments in communication and technology and should not shy away from the exploration of online education. Online education is gaining momentum. The push of politicians seeking cost savings and the rapid improvement of online technology will compel reluctant journalism educators to explore online distance education. Just as there was a rapid diffusion of computer-assisted reporting classes during the past few years, it is likely that online distance education will be widespread through journalism and mass communication programs by the year 2000.

Conclusion

Most journalism and mass communication educators have incorporated the teaching of online resources into their curriculum. They are establishing Web pages, talking to their students by e-mail, and teaching computer-assisted reporting and information retrieval. Although a significant percentage of professors and students are not utilizing online resources, the rapid diffusion of these resources suggests adoption by increasing numbers.

However, just a few venturesome programs are actually teaching students online. Whether or not educators at traditional universities approve of the concept of virtual education, this technological innovation seems to have caught the imagination of private entrepreneurs as well as elected officials seeking financial savings in state budgets.

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[52] Martin, 1. University of Alaska President Jerome Komisar said that the typical 18 year old would not look forward to a four-year course of study from a computer on his family's kitchen table.

Therefore, educators at traditional institutions cannot ignore the opportunities and limitations of online education. The enthusiasm for distance learning, in particular through online connections, that is being heard in higher education circles and in state legislatures suggests that teaching online is the wave of the not-too-distant future. Either educators at traditional programs will have to adopt these innovations or substantiate for politicians and prospective students why online education is an inadequate delivery system. Journalism educators must prepare for the debate by becoming more familiar with online distance education models.

This study has shown what has been done thus far in journalism and mass communication education online. Future studies should evaluate the current ventures into online education and test new models for using online resources in journalism and mass communication education. Which teaching methods -- lecture, real-time discussion, asynchronous question and answer -- are more effective in the online environment? How does the performance of students in a traditional classroom compare to students in the same class taught online? Other research should survey the attitudes of journalism and mass communication faculty and, in particular, students towards online distance education. After all, the students are the customers. If they are dubious about online distance education, then the model is unlikely to displace many traditional classrooms.